

# PIANO SAFARI® FOR THE OLDER STUDENT SIGHT READING & THEORY BOOK 1

## TEACHER GUIDE

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Piano Safari for the Older Student is designed for students ages 10 through adult.

Level 1 consists of:



Repertoire & Technique Book 1

- Reading Pieces
- Rote Pieces
- Technique Exercises
- Technique Rote Pieces
- Challenge Pieces
- Improvisation Pieces



Sight Reading & Theory Book 1

- Sight Reading Exercises
- Rhythm Exercises
- Written Theory

The two books in Level 1 of Piano Safari for the Older Student work together to provide reinforcement for each concept presented. The five units of each book are correlated.

Each concept is learned through various kinds of pieces and exercises.

- Students first learn a concept by *playing* it in a **Rote Piece**.
- They then learn the notation for the concept by *seeing* it in **Reading Pieces**
- They gain further confidence by *practicing* the concept in **Sight Reading Examples**
- They may also gain further familiarity with a concept or gesture through by encountering it in **Improvisation Pieces** and **Challenge Pieces**.
- They solidify their knowledge through written **Theory**.

For more information on the philosophy of the Piano Safari Older Student Method, see p. 3 of the Teacher Guide Introduction for the *Repertoire & Technique Book 1*.

# IN THIS BOOK

The *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1* includes the following types of exercises.

## THEORY PAGES

Concepts are first presented in the *Older Student Repertoire & Technique Book 1*. The Theory Pages in the *Older Student Sight Reading & Theory Book 1* provide students with additional practice in analyzing and writing these concepts.

These pages can be assigned at the teacher's discretion throughout the student's study of a unit. The student should work within a unit until the entire unit's pieces, techniques, sight reading exercises, and theory pages are completed in each book before graduating to the next unit. The order in which pieces and exercises are assigned is left to the discretion of the teacher.

## SIGHT READING EXERCISES

Working only on the Reading Pieces found in the *Repertoire & Technique Book 1* will not provide students with enough reinforcement for each reading concept. We have therefore included additional Sight Reading Exercises for each unit in the *Sight Reading & Theory Book 1*. These are indispensable to a student's study.

In addition to providing practice in reading, these exercises can also be used to refine technical concepts. Exercises in Units 1 - 2 should be played exclusively with a *non legato* articulation. This allows the student to use arm weight to produce good tone, play with a relaxed technique, develop a correct piano hand shape, and play with confidence.

*Legato* is introduced in Unit 3 in the *Repertoire & Technique Book 1* (p. 52). The Sight Reading Exercises in Unit 3 can be played *non legato* or *legato* at the teacher's discretion. The goal is for the student to be able to play either articulation on command.

In Unit 4 - 5, slur marks are included in the Sight Reading Exercises. Students should play all slurred notes *legato* and non slurred notes *non legato*.

Sight Reading & Rhythm Exercises can be completed throughout the student's study within a unit of both books. The number of exercises to be done in the lesson or group class or to be assigned for home practice is left to the teacher's discretion.

The reading progression is correlated between the *Older Student Repertoire & Technique Book 1* and the *Older Student Sight Reading & Theory Book 1*. It proceeds as follows:

UNIT	READING PIECES: MAIN CONCEPTS
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-staff notation on black and white keys</li> <li>• Fingers 1 2 3 4 5</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landmark Notes of Treble G, Bass C, and Middle C</li> <li>• Interval of a 2nd</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interval of a 3rd</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nds &amp; 3rds combined beginning on Landmark Notes</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note Names on the entire staff</li> <li>• 2nds &amp; 3rds beginning on various notes on the staff</li> </ul>

## RHYTHM EXERCISES

Rhythm Exercises allow students to focus solely on rhythmic development by tapping the rhythm, playing it on one note on the piano (or hands together, one note in each hand), or playing on a drum. Students may also improvise on a set of keys (a black key group or pentascale position) using the rhythm.

Students should count syllabically, using the syllables found in the book on p. 5. Syllabic counting allows students to feel the rhythm in a musical way.

Metric counting is introduced in Unit 4 on p. 42. Students can then count both syllabically and metrically, gradually converting solely to metric counting as they feel comfortable.

## COMPLETING A SIGHT READING & RHYTHM EXERCISE

Each Sight Reading & Rhythm Exercise should be played at least three times correctly before checking off the Completed box. There are many ways to play the exercises.

For the Sight Reading Exercises, the student may:

- Play three times correctly as written
- Play hands together in parallel or contrary motion
- Play at various tempos or dynamic levels
- Play with eyes closed
- Play with a book held over the hands to prevent looking at the hands while reading
- Some exercises may work well played in a round.
- For selected exercises, you may create a blocked 5th accompaniment to play in the LH while the RH plays the melody.

For the Rhythm Exercises, the student may:

- Tap with one hand on the fallboard
- Tap hands together on the fallboard
- Play on a drum
- Play on one note on the piano
- Play hands together on the piano (one note in each hand)
- Improvise a melody using the rhythm
- Count aloud syllabically
- Count aloud metrically (Units 4 - 5)
- Play at various tempos
- Play the rhythm while the teacher or another student taps steady quarter notes
- Create a class improvisation, with some students playing steady whole, half, or quarter notes on a blocked 5th (such as A E) while another student improvises a melody in an A Minor pentascale position
- Play in a round

For additional teaching resources, including Videos and Essays, visit **[pianosafari.com](http://pianosafari.com)**.



# UNIT 1

## Objectives

### Theory

- Understand the layout of the keyboard in groups of two and three black keys
- Learn that the keys are organized according to the Music Alphabet: A B C D E F G
- Find individual keys in every octave based on the groups of two and three black keys
- Learn rhythmic values and count syllabically (Ta)

- **Why Syllabic Counting?** Students learn to count syllabically (Ta) as shown in the book on p. 5 before counting metrically. Syllabic counting allows students to feel the rhythm in a musical way and prevents saying “the right numbers in the wrong rhythm,” which can result from introducing metric counting too soon.
- **Why Eighth Notes From the Beginning?** We introduce eighth note rhythms from the beginning to add more variety and interest to the rhythms. Because we use a syllabic counting system, eighth notes are easy to count. We have found that students who begin in this way avoid problems with subdivision and are more rhythmically musical and confident.

### Sight Reading & Rhythm

- Learn finger numbers in both hands
- Track from left to right when reading
- Play and count basic rhythm values syllabically, and recognize common rhythmic patterns in larger groups

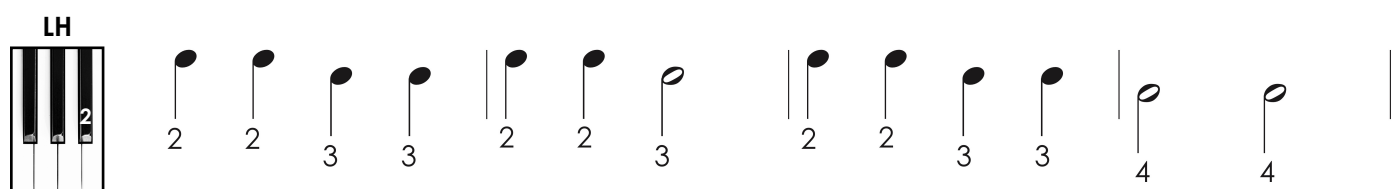
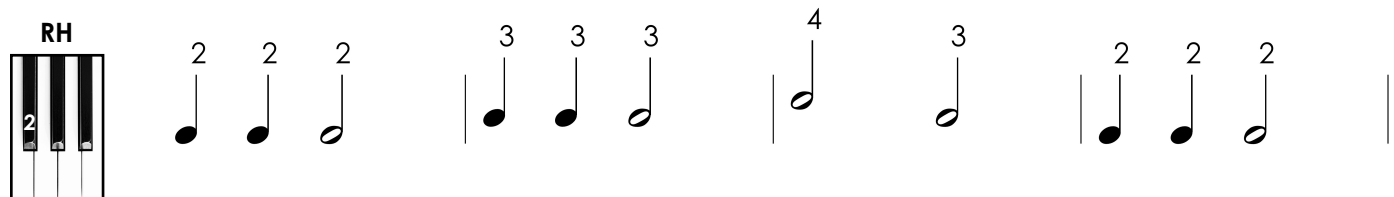
- **Why Pre-Staff Notation?** Pre-staff notation allows the student to learn the finger numbers for each hand, master tracking from left to right, and become confident with basic rhythms before adding the complexities of reading on the staff. We have found that it is well worth having older beginners start learning to read notation through a short period of pre-staff study, even if they might be able to begin reading directly on the staff. It is much better for students to begin piano with the idea, “Reading music is easy!” rather than struggling due to trying to master too many new concepts at once. It is best to lay a solid foundation in reading rather than rushing through the beginning stages.

# UNIT 1

## Teaching an Exercise



#1 COMPLETE



- **RH Reading Exercise.** Have the student play on the fallboard while saying the finger numbers aloud. You may help the student track by pointing to the notes on the page with a pencil from above. Or you may tap the rhythm and say the finger numbers along with the student.
- After previewing on the fallboard, the student can play on the piano. The exercises in Units 1 - 3 should be played *non legato*, with the forearm moving as a unit.
- Work toward a good piano hand shape, with a raised bridge, gently curved fingers, strong fingertips, and relaxed non playing fingers. (Curling or very straight fingers is a sign of tension.)
- The student should play the exercise correctly three times. If more challenge is needed, have the student play using the variations listed on p. 4 of this Teacher Guide.
- **LH Reading Exercise.** Repeat the steps above.
- **Rhythm Tapping Exercise.** Have the student tap and count syllabically as shown above. For variations, see p. 4.
- Check the Completed Box when the exercise has been learned, and move to the next exercise.

# UNIT 2

## Objectives

### Theory

- Learn about the staff
- Recognize and write the Landmark Notes of Treble G, Bass C, and Middle C. Find these notes on the piano
- Learn about Time Signatures
- Learn about rests
- Identify and write Unisons and 2nds on the staff
- Learn rules for stem direction

### Sight Reading & Rhythm

- Identify the Landmark Note at the beginning of each exercise.
- Start on various fingers on Landmark Notes to avoid associating one finger with a specific key
- Read intervallically from the Landmark Note (up, down, same)
- Read Unisons and 2nds exclusively

**Intervallic Reading** After teaching many different reading approaches, including Middle C, multi-key, intervallic, and eclectic (a combination), we have found that students who learn to read intervallically in a systematic way become the most confident and fluent readers.

Advanced pianists read by seeing shapes, contours, and patterns rather than by reading each note individually by note name. In other words, they read intervallically. Training beginning students to recognize patterns and intervals will allow them to develop into expert sight readers.

Although it is important for students to learn to instantly recognize any note on the staff, the primary way students read will be intervallic. We introduce Note Names on the staff in Unit 5. Students eventually combine intervallic reading with their instant recognition of note names as they continue to practice sight reading.

# UNIT 2

## Teaching an Exercise



#1



- **RH Reading Exercise.** Have the student write in the name of the first note (Landmark Note of Treble G). All exercises in Units 2 - 4 begin on a Landmark Note on various fingers.
- Without looking at the score, have the student place RH Finger 2 on G. Have him play each note according to your verbal instructions, "G. up a 2nd, up a 2nd, down a 2nd, down a 2nd, same, same..." You may use the pattern of the RH Reading Exercise or create your own melody. Use only Unisons and 2nds. This will allow the student to understand how to play these intervals before seeing the notation.
- Have the student look at the exercise and point to each note in the score (note head, not note stem) while saying the direction, "Up, down, and same." He\* may then play the exercise. All exercises in Unit 1 - 2 should be played *non legato* to solidify the hand position and to keep the arm relaxed and involved in tone production.
- **LH Reading Exercise.** Repeat the steps above.
- **Rhythm Tapping Exercise.** Along with tapping and saying the rhythm syllabically as indicated, draw the student's attention to any repeating rhythms. In the example above you could ask the student to find the matching measures (m. 1 and 3). Then he could tap those measures while you are in charge of tapping the other measures. This will help the student see rhythms in larger groupings rather than reading note by note.

\* Students are referred to in the masculine for clarity of prose.

# UNIT 3

## Objectives

### **Theory**

- Identify and write Unisons and 3rds on the staff
- Practice writing music on the staff on Copywork pages. We include Copywork because this is how famous composers such as Handel and Bach learned to understand and write music. Copywork is a great way to reinforce concepts the student is learning. Plus, writing notes on the staff is fun!

### **Sight Reading & Rhythm**

- Identify the Landmark Note at the beginning of each exercise.
- Start on various fingers on Landmark Notes to avoid associating one finger with a specific key
- Read intervallically from the Landmark Note (up, down, same)
- Read Unisons and 3rds exclusively

Students have become experts at reading Unisons and 2nds in Unit 2. In Unit 3, they focus exclusively on 3rds and Unisons. Spending an extended period of time focusing on reading one interval builds the student's ability to instantly recognize and play that specific interval before combining it with other intervals.

# UNIT 3

## Teaching an Exercise



#1



- **RH Reading Exercise.** Have the student write in the name of the first note (Landmark Note of Treble G). All exercises in Units 2 - 4 begin on a Landmark Note on various fingers.
- Without looking at the score, have the student place RH Finger 1 on G. Have him play each note according to your verbal instructions, "G. up a 3rd, up a 3rd, same..." You may use the pattern of the RH Reading Exercise or create your own melody. Use only Unisons and 3rds. This will allow the student to feel 3rds in his hand before seeing the notation.
- look at the exercise and point to each note in the score (note head, not note stem) while saying the direction, "Up, down, and same." He may then play the exercise *non legato*. *Legato* is introduced in the *Repertoire & Technique Book 1* in Unit 3 on p. 52. Once the student has become comfortable playing *legato*, he may review the Sight Reading Exercises in Units 2 and 3, playing them *legato*.
- **LH Reading Exercise.** Repeat the steps above.
- **Rhythm Tapping Exercise.** Tap and count syllabically as shown above.

# UNIT 4

## Objectives

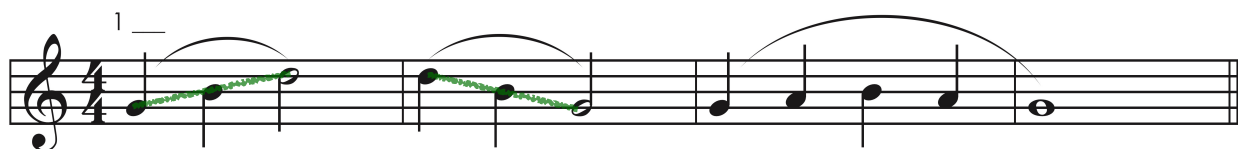
### Theory

- Analyze, write, and hear 2nds and 3rds on the staff
- Learn to count metrically

### Sight Reading & Rhythm

- Identify the Landmark Note at the beginning of each exercise.
- Start on various fingers on Landmark Notes to avoid associating one finger with a specific key
- Read intervallically from the Landmark Note (up, down, same)
- Read Unisons, 2nds, and 3rds combined
- Play with the indicated articulation. Slurred notes are *legato*. Non slurred notes are *non legato*.

After an extended period focusing on the interval of a 2nd in Unit 2 followed by the interval of a 3rd in Unit 3, students may now read 2nds and 3rds combined. Some students may benefit from marking the 3rds with a “3rds color,” (in this case green) to differentiate between 2nds and 3rds until they become comfortable with instantly recognizing the changing intervals.

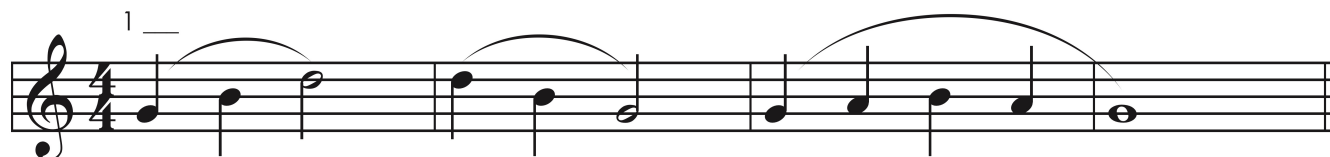


# UNIT 4

## Teaching an Exercise



#1



- **RH Reading Exercise.** Have the student write in the name of the first note (Landmark Note of Treble G). All exercises in Units 2 - 4 begin on a Landmark Note on various fingers.
- Without looking at the score, have the student place RH Finger 1 on G. Have him play each note according to your verbal instructions as you did in Units 2 and 3. However, this time you will combine 2nds and 3rds, "Up a 2nd, up a 3rd, down a 2nd..."
- Have the student analyze where the 2nds and 3rds are in each exercise. He can then preview silently on the surface of the keys before playing. If the student would like to mark the 3rds, have him do so with his "3rds color," which should remain the same color for every exercise.
- Be sure the student plays with the correct articulation. Slurred notes are played *legato* with a slight lift between phrases. Non slurred notes are played *non legato*.
- **LH Reading Exercise.** Repeat the steps above.
- **Rhythm Tapping Exercise.** Draw the student's attention to any patterns. In the example above, have him find the matching measures. Then tap and count syllabically.



# UNIT 5

## Objectives

### Theory

- Learn to name any note on the staff using the Skips Alphabet
- Count the *anacrusis* metrically

### Sight Reading & Rhythm

- Identify the starting note of an exercise, which can be any note on the staff
- Read intervallically from the starting note using Unisons, 2nds, and 3rds combined

- **Intervals and Note Names Combined.** The Theory pages in Unit 5 provide the student with a general overview of how to find any note on the staff using the Skips Alphabet of F A C E G B D. After this initial presentation, much practice and drill will be required for the student to instantly recognize any note on the staff and play it in the correct octave on the piano automatically. This practice will continue into Level 2 and 3 and beyond. The student's primary mode of reading will be intervallic, but this will be eventually be combined with an instant recognition of every note on the staff.
- **Why Not Mnemonics?** Using mnemonics such as "All Cows Eat Grass" has been shown to actually slow down the process of recognizing notes on the staff. This is because of the extra steps involved with remembering the correct mnemonic and then translating it to the note on the staff and to the keyboard. ("Is 'All Cows Eat Grass' on the line or space notes, treble or bass clef? I can't remember.") We have found the Skips Alphabet to be a simpler and more secure process for students to find note names. (See Samantha Coates' article about mnemonics here: <https://blitzbooks.com/every-good-boy-deserves-forgetting/>.)

## Teaching an Exercise

Example 1: A 4/4 measure containing a quarter note, a quarter note, a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a half note, and a whole note.

- **RH Reading Exercise.** Have the student identify and write in the name of the first note using the Skips Alphabet. In this exercise, he should recognize that the note is in the F space, which is one of the starting places for counting with the Skips Alphabet.
- Have the student analyze where the 2nds and 3rds are in each exercise and preview silently on the surface of the keys before playing. At this point, he should not need to mark 3rds.
- Be sure the student plays with the correct articulation. Slurred notes are played *legato* with a lift between phrases. Non slurred notes are played *non legato*.
- **LH Reading Exercise.** Repeat the steps above. To find the first note in this exercise, the student would point to the bottom line G and count up using the Skips Alphabet (G B **D**).
- **Rhythm Tapping Exercise.** Use the variations on p. 4 of this Teacher Guide if desired as the student becomes adept at tapping rhythms. Count syllabically and metrically.